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ABSTRACT

This document describes a film and videotape series of seven half-hour programs about two Indian tribes of Wisconsin. The first three programs deal with the Oneida tribe and the final four deal with the Menominee. The programs are: (1) "To Keep a Heritage Alive," discussing the educational history of the Oneida people and their current efforts to maintain their culture and language; (2) "The Learning Path," exploring the ways that education can be responsive to Indian needs; (3) "Land is Life," a history of the Oneidas' troubles with land ownership; (4) "Ancestors of Those Yet Unborn," a study of Menominee members' lives, lifestyles, and personal feelings; (5) "Living with Tradition," a glimpse of some of the Menominee people and the traditions they are trying to maintain; (6) "Dreamers with Power-Part 1," a personal offering from a group of Menominee young people, which through the use of music and drama broken by interludes of discussion with problems in reservation life and stereotypes of the tribe; and (7) "Dreamers with Power-Part 2," a continuation of the same production. The document summarizes each film and makes suggestions for pre- and post-telecast discussion topics. (TES)

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FOREST SPIRITS

A film and videotape series of seven half-hour programs dealing with two Indian tribes of Wisconsin. Programs 1-3 concern the Oneida nation; 4-7 the Menominee people.

Oneida Programs	Menominee Programs
To Keep a Heritage Alive	Ancestors for Those Yet Unborn
The Learning Path	Living With Tradition
Land is Life	Dreamers With Power - Part I
	Dreamers With Power - Part II
* * *	* * *
Joel Freedman/Producer-Project Director	George Burdeau/Project Director
	Saunders Spooner/Producer
Tom Shachtman/Writer	
	Anthony Brown/Director
Ed Lynch/Camera	
	Steve Messier/Writer
Sarah Stein/Editor	
	Dick Gilbert/Editor
Saunders Spooner/Production Manager	
	Royal Warrington/O.J.T.
Anthony Brown/O.J.T.	
	Nathalyn Waupoose/O.J.T.

Produced by: N.E. Wisconsin In-School Telecommunications (NEWIST)
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54302
Phone: (414) 465-2599

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3/4" Video Cassette and 1/2" VHS Videotapes are also available. For more information, please contact:

Eileen Littig, ITV Director/Producer
NEWIST - UWGB
IS 1110
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54302
Phone: (414) 465-2599

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FOREST SPIRITS
Program 1

To Keep a Heritage Alive

Synopsis:

Something happened to the Oneidas of Wisconsin around the turn of the century which caused them to almost lose their heritage: a whole generation was sent to boarding school, which nearly wiped out the use of the Oneida language and customs.

Today the Oneida tongue [illegible] by Oneidas to Oneida children, in order that the young [illegible]d it and not lose their heritage. Heritage components are [illegible]nguage, artifacts and momentoes, a religious code and moral [illegible] respect for the elders, and a way of regarding the land.

Pre-Telecast:

Point out that for the average non-Indian American, heritage is an important concept--but not an over-riding concern. Most Americans are the children or grandchildren of immigrants, and heritage consists of religious continuity or feelings of ancestors having come from a certain place. For Indians, however, heritage needs to be a living experience, in order for a particular tribe or nation to maintain its identity within American society.

Post-Telecast:

1. Why is a heritage so important to Indian peoples, and particularly for the Oneidas?

2. Do you have a heritage? What elements of it are important to you?

3. Have you learned anything from your grandparents? Do you think you could learn anything from them?

4. What can we learn from the Oneidas' experience in trying to regain their heritage? Is this important to non-Indian people also?

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Program 2

The Learning Path

Synopsis:

Recent feeling on the part of Indian groups say that white society's educational system may not be the best answer for Indians, because it is unresponsive to many Indian needs. Two ways of making the system responsive are explored: 1) Within the system, working for change through parent committees, students trying extra hard, and supplementing education in the Indian home. 2) Outside the system, providing alternate schools for Indian children unable to make it in the regular school system. The approaches combine in a confrontation with the Green Bay Curriculum Committee over the introduction of an Indian history and culture course in the city's high schools.

Pre-Telecast:

Education is something most Americans take for granted, without questioning it. Generations of immigrants and minority groups have always accepted the idea that the way to join the majority society was to get an education. But does education always serve the needs of minorities? Have you ever thought deeply about the whys and wherefores of your school system?

Post-Telecast:

1. Which approach towards changing the educational system do you think will be the most productive?

2. What changes would you make in the schools to accommodate Indian children?

3. Do you think your school is responsive to your own needs? If not, what would you do to change it?

4. Have you ever thought deeply about the whys and wherefores of your school system?

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Program 3

Land is Life

Synopsis:

A history of the Oneidas' troubles with land is shown. Program covers their trip to Wisconsin from New York, the allotting of their lands, and subsequent loss of most of their land. Oneidas wishing to come back to the "reservation" have difficulty doing so, because there is not enough good land to build upon. Oneidas are trying to 1) get back lands they have lost, and 2) improve and work on lands they currently control. The Federal Government helps a bit, but often hinders these processes. In the last few years, the Oneida nation has become more aggressive about pursuing land for its members.

Pre-Telecast:

Land in this country means something entirely different to Indians than it does to non-Indian people. For non-Indians, land is a commodity to be bought and sold; for Indians it can be something much more. Imagine what it must have been like to have the run of the whole of what is now the United States. Though we don't often think about it, land is the very center of our existence in this country; and all of that land was bought, taken or stolen from the Indian nations.

Post-Telecast:

1. If you were an Indian, how would you feel about land that was once "yours?"

2. Discuss the General Allottment Act--why did it do what it did? Do you think non-Indians understood the impact it would have on Indian nations?

3. Do you think the U.S. government should give Indian nations money to re-purchase land to live on?

4. If the Oneidas had more land, do you think they might be less poor?

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Program 4

Ancestors of Those Yet Unborn

Synopsis:

Though the size of their nation is smaller now, the Menominee Indians have lived in the same basic region in Northern Wisconsin for hundreds of years. Menominee means "wild rice men," because rice was one of the staple foods they harvested in order to live. Not many gather wild rice today but, like their ancestors, today's Menominee still derive part of their living from the over two hundred thousand acres of forest land on which the tribe now lives. "Ancestors" is a glimpse at the lives, lifestyles and personal feelings of some of the members of the Menominee tribe.

Pre-Telecast:

Outwardly the Menominee live a twentieth century life not unlike that of many other non-farming rural communities. But beneath that appearance, there is a different sense of the collective past and future that affects how and why Menominee people live. Menominees own land, they hunt, they harvest and process lumber in their forests. But in all these things there are essential differences as compared to white society, differences that are treasured and passed from one generation to another, the basis of a distinct culture.

Post Telecast:

1. Remember the words of the young hunters, the deer skinner, the old woman in the kitchen and the young man at the end; discuss the meaning of "Indian Ways."

2. What is the importance of children in the Menominee concept of life in the present and the future?

3. What is the importance of land and the things that live on it to the Menominee? Is this concept different than that of white people?

4. Go outside, find a wooded area and stand there alone. Close your eyes and use your other senses to feel your surroundings. Then open your eyes and pretend you're seeing this all for the first time. Imagine all these things are a personal gift to you from your grandparents.

5. Make a list of those things in your community you want to leave for your children.

6. At lunch, share what you have with someone else whether you know them or not.

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Program 5

Living With Tradition

Synopsis:

For a short period in their history, the Menominee of Wisconsin were not Indians. Under a federal process called "termination," the government ended the protected status of the Menominee as an Indian tribe. Their reservation became a county. Land that at one time was held collectively became personal property. Though they were forced to live like white people and lost some of the outward appearance of their uniqueness, the thread of a culture survived. With the aid of a return to tribal status in 1973, the Menominee today are reaffirming their heritage. "Living" is a glimpse at some of the Menominee people and the tradition they are trying to keep alive.

Pre-Telecast:

In a broad sense this film deals with education and health in the Menominee tribe. However, the curriculum that is important to the Menominee elders differs greatly from what would be taught in a formal school. The health that is important is not necessarily individual and personal, but rather the health of the Menominee as a people. Most important, these two entities are shown in a state of flux. Tradition has always existed, but this film shows a new group who are affirming "Indianness" as a positive force, a source of pride.

Post-Telecast:

1. Keeping "termination" in mind, discuss why most of the people you see or hear in this film are either over 50 or under 30 years old.

2. Discuss the value of old people in the Menominee concept of education. Does this differ from the white culture?

3. Discuss the difference, if any, in the ways Indians learn and teach as compared to a formal school system.

4. Accurate storytelling is essential in keeping "Indian Ways" alive. Make up a story to be told privately from one student to another like the party game, but with the intent of word-for-word accuracy as the final goal.

5. Write a story that incorporates some of the particular traditions of your own family culture or ethnic background.

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Program 6

Dreamers with Power - Part I

Synopsis:

Along with many other Indian tribes in this country, the Menominee of Wisconsin share a certain complex of problems stemming from reservation life, but similar to those in any small, closed community. There are a number of stereotypes that have arisen about reservation life over the years. The two "Dreamers" programs deal with these stereotypes and problems by showing their basis in terms of Menominee history.

"Dreamers" is a very personal offering from a group of Menominee young people. There is music and a play broken up into parts, interspersed with a discussion by the cast of the play of each scene and its significance. All of it is original material written and performed by the people you will meet.

Pre-Telecast:

Most of the questions that may arise in each scene of the play will be answered in the discussion session immediately following. While this play is now in written form, all the episodes are part of the Menominee oral "Indian way," with careful attention to detail.

Post-Telecast:

1. Discuss the meaning of the title "Dreamers with Power." (Include content of Part II.)

2. Discuss "49" and "powwow" and its relation to the social and cultural life of the Menominee tribe. Is there anything comparable to it in your culture or community?

3. Discuss the attitudes of the cast members both in the play and the talk sessions. How do they feel about what has happened to their people through history? How do they feel about themselves? How do you feel about them?

4. Write and perform a short play about an historical incident that has been related to you about your family or ethnic history.

5. Think of something you don't like about the way your family or community lives, then trace back historically the origin of this behavior.

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Program 7

Dreamers with Power - Part II

Synopsis:

Dreamers Without Power is the title of a book written about the Menominee of Wisconsin. The young people who conceived, wrote and performed the play "Dreamers with Power" paraphrased the title to give it a new positive meaning. Traditionally the Menominee were known as dreamers. Members of the tribe would fast, have a vision, then the vision would be interpreted to develop a course of action or to make a decision. In the title of this show, power refers to a new vision, a feeling the young people in the tribe have about themselves as a distinct and important Indian nation. It is a power to reshape the future, carrying the traditions of an Indian way of life with them for the next generation of Menominee.

As in the first show, this second part continues a music, play, discussion format. The scenes represent historical episodes that have shaped the present day existence of the tribe.

Pre-Telecast:

"B.I.A." refers to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a division of the Department of the Interior. The B.I.A. is responsible for the supervision of Indian reservations in the United States. "Termination" refers to the government policy that ended the Menominee status as an Indian tribe protected by the federal government. The Menominee reservation became a county in the early 1960's. Then through a process called "restoration," tribal status was reinstituted in 1973. (A helpful book for exploring this policy further is: Freedom with Reservation, 1972, Shames, Deborah, Editor, National Committee to Save the Menominee People and Forest, 520 University Ave., Madison, Wisc. 53703)

Post-Telecast:

1. Discuss assimilation of the Indian into the white culture as depicted in the play. What is the value of a "melting pot" society? What is the harm? How does assimilation apply to other cultures in this country besides the Indian?

2. Discuss the value or harm of formal education and English language training to the Menominee people both today and in the past.

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